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NON-STANDARD FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

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Abstract. *This paper examines unconventional forms of employment, creative industries and digital labour platforms. Although non-standard forms of employment are not a new concept, the development of digital technologies*

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has given this field a new dynamic. New professions appear, old ones become obsolete, and new models of employment replace the previous, standard ones. These changes are particularly noticeable in creative industries, since people are the basic resource, with their knowledge, innovation and creativity. New forms of employment, which are not yet (or clearly) regulated, have been created, as well as the new means of finding jobs. This paper will provide an overview of non-standard employment opportunities in creative industries and examine the motives behind creative workers choosing freelancing as their employment status. In addition, the paper explores the use of various online platforms for recruiting freelancers. Through a scientific description and analysis of various forms of non-standard employment in the creative industries, the objective of the study is to expand knowledge about the position of freelancers, who constitute a significant portion of workers engaged in this field. The most effective method of finding work is also determined through an overview of the digital platforms that freelancers most frequently use to seek jobs. Content analysis and case studies are used in addition to standard scientific methods of analysis and description. Finally, the paper concludes with the research results and other contributions made during the research.

Keywords: *creative industries, non-standard employment, freelancing employment, digital platforms*

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement, economic development, and social change have brought about changes in the work environment and employment. A shift in the approach to how work is organized, along with significant changes in workers' status and position have been caused by technological progress. The manner in which people work and engage in employment is changing substantially as a result of the widespread use of information technologies. While some entirely new professions are emerging,

others are fading from existence. Additionally, new career opportunities are more frequently replacing traditional ones. The Covid-19 epidemic further emphasized the need for new types of outsourcing work, while also highlighting the value of utilizing digital technologies in business (Pulignano *et al.* 2021).

Numerous theorists have discussed the precariat and the global category of precarious workers as traits of contemporary society (Standing 2016). Precariousness is characterized by unpredictability, fixed-term, informal and temporary employment, as well as little to no labour rights and protection (Mireia *et al*. 2017, 389–409).

Creative professionals, who frequently come from the fields of arts, culture and entertainment are essential to the creative industry, as it depends entirely on their skills, creativity, and creation. In those terms, people are considered to be the primary resource in the creative industries, which are defined as activities that occur as a result of individual cognition, skills, talent, and creativity (Boix-Domènech, Rausell-Köster 2018). Over the past few decades, the transition from standard to non-standard employment in the creative industries occurred along with the emergence of new categories of temporary workers with variously defined labour rights. Most of them are part-time employees who occasionally work for different organizations, project-based experts, as well as people with unstable and insecure jobs or those who are unemployed in the classic sense of the word (Fagan *et al*. 2014). Young designers, journalists, and others who work under contract in the creative industries often begin their careers with voluntary internships. These arrangements are also considered to be a type of unconventional employment (Wallis *et al.* 2020, 178–193).

The new business model is implemented by increasing productivity, effectiveness, and maximum labour force utilization, whenever needed and for a limited time, with very frequent and rapid employee rotation. This has drawn more attention to some of the possible negative consequences of non-standard work, including employment insecurity, lower earnings,

and limited or no access to employee benefits (such as pension plans) or social programs (such as Employment Insurance). The emergence of the platform economy is one of the most important new transformations in the world of work. Important components of the platform economy are digital labour platforms which include both web-based platforms, where work is outsourced through an open call to a geographically dispersed crowd, and location-based applications (apps) which allocate work to individuals in a specific geographical area, typically to perform local, service-oriented tasks such as driving, online shopping, delivery, running errands or housecleaning (Berg 2016, 543–576).

Digital labour platforms offer income-generating opportunities to workers and their flexible work arrangements, and may be more convenient for certain workers, such as women, people with disabilities and young individuals. They also provide opportunities for those marginalized in traditional labour markets, such as refugees and migrant workers. In addition, they provide an avenue for workers to complement their earnings from low paying or seasonal jobs (Surie, Sharma 2019, 127–138). Given that digital labour platforms are emerging as an important source of income-generating opportunities, many governments in developing countries are investing in digital infrastructure and supporting training programs developed by the private sector to equip the workforce with digital skills (Graham *et al.* 2017, 135–162).

Non-standard forms of employment – also referred to as diverse forms of work – is an umbrella term for different employment arrangements that deviate from standard employment. They include temporary employment; part-time and on-call work; temporary agency work and other multiparty employment relationships; as well as disguised employment and dependent self-employment (Leduc, Misangumukini 2020, 29). As working from home does not take place at the employer's premises, but rather at the worker's home or another location of their choosing, it too is considered a diverse employment arrangement. Non-standard

employment features prominently on digital labour platforms (ILO 2021, 29–70). At present, various forms of non-standard employment are developing very fast. However, the authors propose that freelancing is the most relevant. It is a model of labour organization and/or civil activity in which an employee is not a full-time specialist of the organization, but fulfils their duties, remotely, on a contract basis, usually applying relevant information and telecommunication technologies (Grimov 2016, 79–81).

This paper will provide an overview of freelance employment options in creative industries and a discussion of the factors that influence creative professionals' decisions to work as independent contractors. Additionally, the paper makes use of empirical research in the form of a case study to examine how digital platforms might be used to employ freelancers in unconventional ways.

Research methods are adapted to the subject and objectives of this paper. Contemporary forms of labour and employment will be described. An analysis will then be carried out by examining and explaining factors of the research subject individually and in interdependent relationships in the sections: Freelancing and creative industries, and Digital labour platforms as a strategy for hiring freelancers. This will be followed by a synthesis, which will merge and bring together all analyzed and systematized knowledge about the elements of the research subject. Finally, inductive and deductive research methods will be used to formulate synthetic conclusions.

CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

Since 2000, Eurofond (The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions), an organization of the European Union that deals with problems in the field of employment, has conducted extensive research in this field in 28 EU countries, which was updated

with new data in 2015 and 2020. Updates are made because over time, various new forms of employment have emerged in most European countries. Their research is aimed at identifying the initial implications of new labour market trends for the labour market and working conditions, as well as at highlighting policy pointers in relation to the identified opportunities and risks. This is done by focusing on policy frameworks and specific employment relationships.

In this study, Eurofound (2020, 4) defined nine categories and the key characteristics of the reported new types of jobs:

1. Employee sharing: Employees are hired and held collectively accountable by a group of employers. The network itself does not seek to earn a profit; however, the idea is similar to temporary agency labour with the goal of pooling staff to balance the human resources (HR) demands of businesses while giving secure employment to workers. Only employees are covered by this employment form (Anon 2016, 21).

2. Job sharing: To collectively fill a single full-time job, a single company hires several individuals. To guarantee that the shared job is permanently staffed, it is a type of part-time work. Only employees are covered by this employment form (Eurofond 2020, 26).

3. Voucher-based work: Instead of an employment contract, the job relationship and related compensation are based on a voucher (often obtained from a third party, such as a governmental entity). Most of the time, workers fall into one of two categories: employees or self-employed (Iudicone 2017).

4. Interim management: A kind of employment when a corporation temporarily and for a specific reason "leases out" employees to other companies. In contrast to a temporary employment agency, its team is made up of highly qualified experts who are assigned to receiving companies to help with a particular management or technical issue or to support them during lean economic times. While interim management shares some characteristics with consulting, the expert is an internal employee

rather than an outside advisor. However, in other places, interim management is done as a form of self-employment (Dźwigoł 2020, 20–26).

5. Casual work: A type of work where the person's employment is not steady and continuous and where the employer is not required to routinely assign work to the employee but is instead free to do so as needed. This employment form only applies to employees (De Stefano 2016, 421–441).

6. ICT-based mobile work: With the aid of contemporary technologies like laptop and tablet computers, the employee or self-employed worker functions from a variety of locations outside the facilities of their employer (for example, at home, at a client's premises, or "on the road"). In comparison to typical teleworking, this is less place-bound (Vargas Llave *et al.* 2020, 57).

7. Platform work: This includes the use of an internet platform or app to match the supply and demand for compensated labour. Although the worker's employment status is unclear, they are typically regarded as independent contractors or freelancers (Eurofond 2020, 26).

8. Portfolio work: This involves small-scale contracting performed by independent contractors, self-employed individuals, or micro businesses for many clients (Eurofond 2020, 26).

9. Collaborative employment: This refers to specific forms of cooperation or networking among the self-employed that go beyond traditional supply chain or business partner relationships (Townsend *et al.* 2014, 915–930).

The Network of Eurofound Correspondents discovered the following in the research from 2020 when compared to the one from 2015:

– Five years later, in most EU Member States, the then-identified job forms were still in use;
– The variety of job opportunities in Europe is growing, but they are still not properly regulated to completely accommodate non-standard employment practices;

– On average, employment and working conditions are worse than in standard employment, and workers' protections are more constrained in platform work, casual work, and voucher-based work.

Specific groups, especially those that are disadvantaged in the labour market because they require flexibility in their working hours or location, may benefit from new kinds of employment by helping them integrate into the labour market and generate a profit (Eurofond 2020, 53–55).

FREELANCING AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Freelancers who are, by default, experts in various forms of creative content development or production, and operate under contract but are not permanent employees constitute a significant portion of non-standard workers in the creative industries (Pulignano *et al.* 2021). Freelancers (part-timers, freelance artists) directly and independently provide services or deliver products, often working from home. These are typically highly entrepreneurial professionals who are able to produce high-quality work while also being more open to innovation and frequently achieving higher levels of income (Spasova *et al.* 2017). They are more engaged in self-promotion because they perform their tasks on a temporary or project basis without the administrative and marketing support that permanent employees may rely on.

This type of business status has a big impact on a freelancer's position, attitude toward their employer, working hours, work-life balance, sense of pride, sense of self-worth, self-esteem, and more. Therefore, it's critical to comprehend why people choose to trade the security of a steady job with a freelancer status and other unconventional types of employment.

For this purpose, we can utilize the findings of an English study (Brighton 2015, 37) on what factors are important for someone to become a freelancer. Jonathan Sapsed and a team of academics from the University of Birmingham classified the variables into three categories:

choice as a result of personal aspiration, economic motives and choice as a consequence of necessity (Brighton 2015, 37).

According to this research, personal aspirations are the most crucial deciding factor. For many professionals, the desire for independence, the freedom to work from any location at any time, and the flexibility to choose a client or project outweigh the need for security and stability (Manyika *et al.* 2016, 35).

The desire for independence, the ability to operate independently from others, and the unlimited implementation of ideas (or being one's own boss) are another important factor.

These qualities were rated as being extremely significant by more than 87% of respondents when choosing a freelancing position. It turns out that flexibility and independence mattered more than the potential for better wages, which was significant to 40% of those surveyed.

Among the younger representatives, who are just starting their careers, there are more of those who selected freelance status since they had no other options.

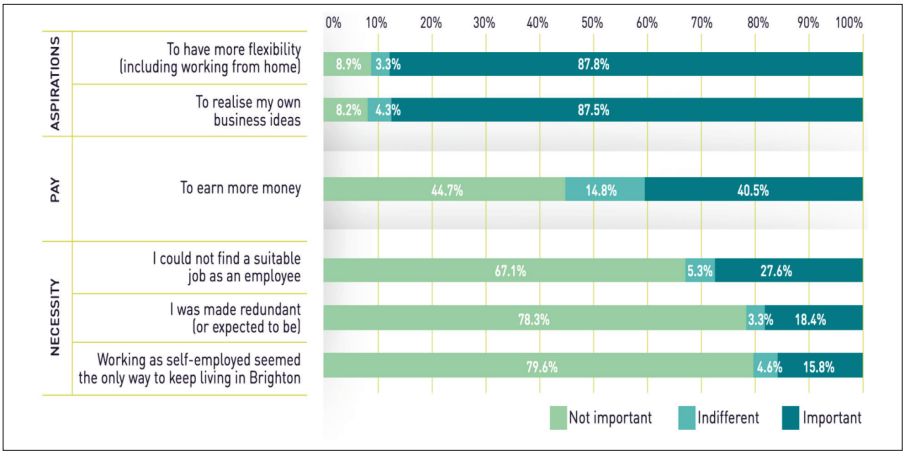

Figure 1. Reasons for becoming a freelancer (Brighton 2015, 37)

The findings of the research among freelancers in the media are similar: journalists and media professionals choose freelancing because

they have an entrepreneurial spirit and feel that it is preferable to be one's own boss because of the flexibility of working hours, independence in choosing topics, and employers (NDNV 2021, 53).

However, there are some limitations associated with the freelancing status (Biltot 2010, 144):

- Although there are periods when freelancers control their time, it is more frequent for working days to exceed 8 hours due to a variety of unpredictable events;
- Although working from home has many benefits, it can also be an obstacle to creativity. The foundation of the creative process is the appreciation of diversity, exchange, and building on one's accomplishments and ideas; focusing on the individual and independence limits and prevents other possibilities (Benton *et al.* 2022). Creative processes are primarily collaborative, even if they depend on the abilities of an individual. A creative product was produced by many different specialists, as evidenced by the credits at the end of a film and the author's acknowledgements at the start of a book (Biltot 2010, 144). Freelancers are denied the creative stimulation that comes from instant discussion about their ideas with co-workers or editors when they operate remotely (Sapsed 2015, 37),
- Independence, or the freedom to pick and choose which projects and clients to work with, ranks strongly among the reasons why people prefer non-traditional working arrangements. Theoretically, independent contractors have the flexibility to reject unpleasant jobs, leave challenging clients, and renegotiate unrealistic deadlines (Kujala *et al.* 2015, 92–106). Since an unlimited army of underpaid, ambitious, and highly qualified people is standing in the corner, watching the creative professionals at work, they rarely have the luxury of turning a client down (Biltot 2010, 144).

DIGITAL LABOUR PLATFORMS: A STRATEGY FOR HIRING FREELANCERS

In recent years, digital technologies have radically transformed and penetrated different sectors of the economy, shaking the traditional foundations of labour markets to the core (ILO 2021, 29–70). The information and communication technology revolution and the internet have set in motion new processes and products, spurring competition and productivity growth. This has led to the rise of digital labour platforms, a contemporary way to organize work and business (Berg 2016, 543–576).

Platforms are either online web-based, with tasks performed online by workers (for example, freelance and microtask services, competitive programming), or location-based, with tasks carried out in-person at specific locations (for example, taxi, delivery, domestic and care services). The number of digital labour platforms, both online web-based and location-based, has grown rapidly over the past decade. Globally, there were at least 777 active platforms operating in January 2021 (based on data from the Crunchbase database; Figure 2) (ILO 2021, 29–70). The number of platforms in the delivery sector is the highest (383), followed

Figure 2. Number of active digital labour platforms in selected categories, globally (Crunchbase database – Rani *et al.* 2021, 47)

by online web-based platforms (283), the taxi sector (106), and there are five hybrid platforms which provide varied types of services such as taxi, delivery and e-commerce services. Among the online web-based platforms, the majority are freelance platforms (181), with a lower number of microtask (46), contest-based (37) and competitive programming (19) platforms (ILO 2021, 29–70).

In order to find and hire freelancers for tasks needed to be done, clients/employers rely on agents, independent databases, registries, as well as informal networks of colleagues and friends, but digital platforms are currently one of the most popular ways to establish a business relationship between parties (Codagnone *et al.* 2016, 9). Digital platforms create a multilateral relationship between freelancers and clients, raising questions about the legal regulation of those relationships due to a possible absence of sufficient clarity regarding rights and obligations, and particularly a potential lack of sufficient clarity regarding responsibilities (Nemkova *et al.* 2019, 226–243). Platforms offer both employers and freelancers a number of benefits and can be the most effective way to find new business opportunities (Nawaz *et al.* 2020, 34–60), despite potential legal concerns.

Most platforms use algorithms to match the supply and demand of paid work. The clients requesting work, the platform managing the algorithm, and the individual providing the work through the platform are all parties to the matching process. Instead of a long-term employment relationship, it is work based on the completion of certain tasks or projects (Jarrahi *et al*. 2021).

In the EU, platform economy revenues in 2020 were projected to reach up to €20 billion. Within the EU, there are more than 500 active digital labour platforms and more than 28 million users of these online networks; by 2025, that figure is anticipated to reach 43 million (European Commission, 2021).

There are numerous venues available for finding freelance work, each of which has unique characteristics. Large ones like Fiverr and Upwork

provide employment opportunities for nearly all segments of the creative industry, while others are smaller and more specialized. Websites like 99designs exclusively post jobs for designers, and the Workana platform has a limited focus on technology (Kurniasari *et al.* 2022, 75–97).

After analysis, Eurofond determined different types of digital platforms:

1. platforms that let clients run a contest to discover freelancers interested in providing the requested service;
2. platforms where clients identify the service they need and ask workers to submit proposals to complete the task;
3. platforms where freelancers advertise their expertise and seek potential clients, and
4. platforms that allow freelancers and clients to connect online while the service is provided in person (Eurofound 2015, 116).

The case study included analysis of the following digital platforms: Upwork, Fiverr, PeoplePerHour, Workana, 99Designs, Shutterstock. It is evident that a relationship has been established between the client and the employee through the digital platform, regardless of the platform. Since employment on digital platforms is sporadic, it is believed that clients and employees have irregular agreements with one another. From the perspective of the digital platform, it is crucial that these two parties are both registered users (ILO 2021, 29–70).

Upwork is a great choice for part-time designers and developers, but also for freelancers from other industries. Thousands of jobs are placed here each year, making it one of the biggest and most used platforms for hiring freelancers. Upwork offers both a premium membership option and a free basic subscription, but for each job received, a fee, which varies based on income, must be paid (Kuhn, Maleki 2017). A freelancer must create an account in order to look for a job on the Upwork platform. The neatness of the account where the freelancer builds a career is essential for landing projects on Upwork.

Fiverr is one of the major networks for independent contractors, where designers, developers, and freelancers from many other industries can find employment. A variety of jobs are available on Fiverr, from traditional occupations like writing, translation, graphic design, to administrative work for virtual assistants, and more (Hannák *et al.* 2017, 1914–1933). On Fiverr, users may sell images, cartoons, and movies. Advertising knowledge and skills is free of charge. However, the network imposes a commission of 20% on each payment that a member receives.

PeoplePerHour is dedicated to hiring independent developers and programmers. This network has a solid reputation among businesspeople for giving top-notch services, as well as among freelancers for providing lucrative part-time jobs. Searching for jobs and creating an account is free (ILO 2021, 71–102).

Workana is a platform for hiring freelancers dealing with technology and design. Freelancers can use it for free, but different commissions are paid each time a client pays for the provided services. In order to use this platform, freelancers must first create an account where they may emphasize the talents they have, search for certain jobs, and send clients proposals that include their professional qualifications, as well as the price and delivery deadlines (Graham, Ferrari 2022, 157–171). The core objective of this platform is to link businesses of all sizes with autonomous, gifted, and qualified professionals to enable everyone to provide quality without boundaries. The nicest aspect is working in a field that has been steadily expanding (McAfee, Brynjolfsson 2017).

99designs is a network that links graphic designers with clients worldwide. This platform provides two options for employment: dealing directly with clients or taking part in competitions. The money is only awarded to the member whose design gets chosen. Free registration is offered, and it is set up so that users can review and rate freelancers' work and categorize them as beginner, mid-level or expert designers. The higher the level of freelancers, the more money they earn (Damian, Manea 2019, 196–201).

Shutterstock platform is one of the most well-known websites for buying, selling, and publishing stock content. Stock photos must adhere to the standards established by the site owner. Compared to other websites for the sale and promotion of stock content, Shutterstock's requirements are rigorous and demanding. Shutterstock runs on the principle of "upload-till-you-drop" and sales are going well if the platform user consistently publishes appealing photographs. As soon as photo uploads become less frequent, so do the sales. The benefits of this platform for independent contractors include the potential for large revenues and a professional approach to authors. One of the drawbacks is the strict criteria that must be followed (Choi *et al.* 2018, 11).

A freelancer needs to fulfil a number of requirements in order to be qualified for this kind of job if they are to be contracted on a digital platform. A freelancer working on a digital platform first and foremost has to be well educated. Their high education is required to handle the challenging tasks offered through digital platforms. (Nemkova *et al.* 2019, 226–243). Second, a freelancer, in addition to high level of education, must also acquire a number of practical skills. Although this primarily refers to understanding of modern technologies and computer skills, they also need to have other cognitive abilities, such as a certain level of social intelligence, the capacity for independent judgment, the potential for creative thinking, and the ability for adapting to new working environments (Toth *et al.* 2020, 553–567). Additionally, a freelancer needs to have a variety of additional talents, including emotional intelligence and project management expertise. Third, studies have indicated that the majority of users who are registered as contractors on digital platforms are young individuals (Dunlop *et al.* 2016, 35–49). Fourth, freelancers on a digital platform have the option of being hired outside of the region in which they reside permanently. The type of job is the fifth and, potentially, most essential factor of employment on digital platforms. Digital platform contractors are mostly self-employed, freelancers, or people

who are officially unemployed but are working in the grey economy (Huđek *et al.* 2020, 56–62).

CONCLUSION

Employers in the creative industries are looking for innovative employment solutions in order to provide "optimal organizational flexibility" in their business models, although, in terms of quality, it is unclear how much more advanced these alternatives are when comparing to conventional forms of employment.

Qualitative analysis of previous studies reveals why people select particular types of employment, as well as how they view flexibility and autonomy in contrast to risk and uncertainty (Arlinghaus *et al.* 2019, 184–200). This paper's positive findings about non-standard employment practices suggest that freelancers are no longer required to work in the same physical location as their clients. Due to their global mobility and ability to collaborate with anyone, the freelance economy is growing significantly each year (Benton *et al.* 2022). Solutions that make working with freelancers easier and more convenient than ever before are driven by increasing demands. Digital platforms are the most efficient approach to finding freelance jobs. At the basic level, freelance platforms provide a connection between those offering jobs and competent creatives. From the perspective of a freelancer, these platforms present great potential because they deliver work directly to their doorstep (in other words, computer) (Rahman 2021, 945–988).

The uncertainty of finding new work and the inconsistency of income are downsides of a non-standard form of employment, which can make being a freelancer a highly stressful scenario (Nawaz *et al.* 2020, 34–60). Additionally, because freelancers frequently perceive their jobs as temporary assignments with a low level of responsibility (they get compensated and leave), it is plausible that in some circumstances they

may be more willing to accept violations of ethical standards (Reljanović, Misailović 2021, 407–432). Unlike full-time employees who can count on benefits that a long-term contract brings (for instance, paid vacation and sick leave, pension and weekends off), freelancers are more likely to experience financial and social insecurity (Spasova *et al.* 2017).

The implications of non-standard employment over the long term should also be considered in future studies. The world has moved to a digital space which is still not fully regulated in terms of legislative or ethical norms. When it comes to identifying specific legal gaps in relation to the practical action encountered by non-standard employees after receiving a job engagement, there are numerous specifics and endless "amendments" that are always provided as powerful counterarguments. The challenge of controlling the status of independent contractors creates a number of problems and concerns, as well as possibilities for additional analysis.

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NESTANDARDNE FORME ZAPOŠLJAVANJA U KREATIVNIM INDUSTRIJAMA

Sažetak. *Okviri ovog istraživanja obuhvataju aspekte nestandardnih oblika zapošljavanja, kreativnih industrija i digitalnih platformi za posao. Iako nestandardni oblici zapošljavanja nisu novi koncept, razvoj digitalnih tehnologija dao je ovoj oblasti novu dinamiku. Pojavljuju se nova zanimanja, stara zastarevaju, a novi modeli zapošljavanja zamenjuju dosadašnje, standardne. Ove promene su veoma uočljive u kreativnim industrijama, jer su ljudi sa svojim znanjem, inovativnošću i kreativnošću osnovni resurs u ovoj oblasti. Stvoreni su novi oblici zapošljavanja, koji još nisu (ili su nejasno) regulisani, kao i novi načini pronalaženja posla. Ovaj rad daje*

pregled nestandardnih mogućnosti zapošljavanja u kreativnim industrijama i ispituje motive zbog kojih kreativni radnici biraju frilensing kao svoj status zaposlenja. Osim toga, rad istražuje upotrebu različitih onlajn platformi za regrutovanje frilensera. Kroz naučnu deskripciju i analizu različitih oblika nestandardnog zapošljavanja u kreativnim industrijama, cilj istraživanja je da proširi saznanja o položaju frilensera, koji čine značajan deo radnika angažovanih u ovoj oblasti. Najefikasniji način pronalaženja posla takođe se utvrđuje kroz pregled digitalnih platformi koje frilenseri najčešće koriste za traženje posla. Analiza sadržaja i studije slučaja se koriste kao dodatak standardnim naučnim metodama analize i deskripcije. Na kraju, rad se završava rezultatima istraživanja i drugim naučnim doprinosom do kojeg se došlo tokom istraživanja.

Ključne reči: *kreativne industrije, nestandardno zapošljavanje, frilensing zapošljavanje, digitalne platforme*